10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

Roberto Thomson waving white bandera as signal of peace. In the Gulf - Sonora. April 26, 1922

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Pulling the boat up the beach above high tide - Kino Bay and Alcatraz Island - 1936

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123 the boat and took dinner. Afterward, we pulled out into the Gulf and skirted the coast, rowing for miles. We passed great red mountains with the sea beating against their rugged breasts, hollowing out deep caverns; then sandy bluffs with mountains receding, but the horizon was always notched with rugged, pinnacled desert ranges.

We landed for the night on a sandy point and made camp. After our supper two fires were built, Roberto's signal that he was on hand. [202] Also a white scarf was tied to a long pole as a signal of friendship. No answering signal appeared. Probably the people were on the opposite side of the Island.

At sunset the sea became calm as a pond and the mountains on Tiburon in the distance turned purple and lavender. The sea reflected all the sky and mountain colors like a mirror.

The next morning we got an early start and it required our united strength to push the boat down to the water as it was low tide. The beach was strewn with various shells and a lot of colored pumice stone which had drifted in from seventy-five miles north, where there are some pumice hills near the sea.

The nearest point of Tiburon was only one and a half miles distant, a short row across. The water was pure green, indicating a shallow sea. [361] We rounded the point and rowed into a bay and then to the head of the bay where there were a few huts called *Rancheria Tinajanita*, or Little Tanks. The water was so shallow in places we had to get out and push the boat a long way out and walk up a long muddy beach over shells and a sort of coral that bruised and cut our bare feet, so that we went as if walking on eggs.

342 The rancheria was built on the shore with no shade; each hut facing
361 the water. The huts were very crude---the frames of *carriso* reed and ocotillo, covered with coarse brush and blankets of dried seaweed.
[351] Around the bottoms, or sides, of each hut were piled sea turtle shells three and a half feet high and two and a half feet wide. Over these were piled seaweed and brush, not fastened. Round about were turtle bones and shells, and sea shells, bones and anything that contained meat.

This was just a temporary camp of about eight huts.

123 We left this camp, raised the sail, which consisted of several
202 flour sacks sewed together, and lay in the bottom of the dug-out, while the one-eyed Mexican steered with a paddle. Before leaving, Ricardo left his sign---a sign agreed between him and the Seris. Since he and his family had been so kind to them, they would never harm him or kill his horses and cattle. He erected a stick with a rag to call attention, made a circle with his heel, and inside the circle made the tracks of his right bare foot and right hand.

123 At the bow we carried the white banner always to signify peace.
361 We crossed the bay to a sandy point and came upon another small

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123 Mile after mile. We got very dry and had almost given up finding the [133] water. We had gone up a sandy wash for miles, barren arid mountains terminating in regular saw tooth pinnacles on all sides, some of beautiful red rock---red as blood; some gray and some lavender.

312 123 At last we came to the water hole which had also been frequented by coyotes, skunks and other animals, and their flavor was easy to taste. But we had ceased to be critical long ago. The hole was really a crooked shaft and led down crude steps worn into the rock for ten or twelve feet. It had been dug by clam shells and bones and sticks, and may have dated back many years. Part of it was through rock and it was a work of great patience to dig with such primitive tools.

123 At the foot, a seepage came through the sand and formed a shallow pool from which, in the semi-darkness, we dipped water and filled our cans. After a rest, all partook of a generous drink. It took us two and a quarter hours---six miles to go there, and we were probably the only white men who had ever been there. I am glad I went for the experience, but we were all completely exhausted on reaching camp. Ricardo and the Mexican carried the cans of water six miles on a stick balanced over the shoulder. Roberto left his sign along the trail. We slept in the Seri huts, all tired out. My feet were tender from walking on the sharp shells and my shoes had shrunk from being wet in salt water, and that pained my feet greatly by cramping them too much.

We heard many interesting tales about the Seris: their wonderful endurance, their susceptibility to disease, their marvelous feats of tracking and swimming, their habit of getting food only when necessary and laying up none ahead, and other queer customs.

The breaking of dawn brought a marvelously beautiful sunrise. It was very low tide and the boat was stranded nearly two hundred feet from water. The sky and sea were crimson and the mountains purple on the Sonora side. The sea was calm, without a ripple, and mirrored every peak and color and made a picture of indescribable beauty.

We ate a hasty breakfast and strained ourselves to the utmost to move the boat. It slowly slid over the grass and shells to the water's edge, and then we had to push it out seventy-five feet in the water to get it deep enough to float. A slight breeze was blowing, so we raised the sail and rounded the point and headed across for another point, across a stretch of water five or six miles.

• [202] At last we saw a few huts and as we neared shore we saw two men with rifles. We waved the white banner, laid our rifles handy, fixed our revolvers, and ran the boat ashore. The men had darted back into the brush as experience had told them to beware of strangers. Roberto and his brother Nene leaped out, leaving their rifles, seized the white flag, ran after the men and called to them and said they were friends who had come to see them. They recognized Roberto, returned to the brush shelters, left their rifles and came to the boat bare-

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123 It was a beautiful morning in early May, and the water was still
[202] as a pond, reflecting all the sunrise tints like a mirror. After a breakfast of clams and broth, bread and sand and bronco tea, we made a big smoke and were answered by a similar smoke two miles off, so we knew our friends were on the way.

123 In one hour they began trailing in, the women each with a load on
482 her head, walking graceful and erect. On one head was an inverted
[415] turtle shell containing nearly all the family belongings done up in rags. On the top was the most precious belonging of all---the rifle. The man carried two or three ollas and other things on a shoulder stick. Everything necessary for their home was carried on their heads.

123 Soon the Indian Blanco was seen paddling in his *balsa;* he also had a load and had paddled all the way from Ironwood camp against wind and sometimes tide. As they were all very thirsty we gave them water around. They immediately went to the shore as it was low tide, and began gathering small oysters from the rocks. Soon each woman returned with a half bushel of them on her head.

About three o'clock and for an hour or so thereafter, Antonio Herrera, the Chief's son Chico, the old Chief Juan Tomas, two other men and one woman, came drifting into camp with their dogs. Each one was loaded with things. They were a pretty wild looking bunch. There was very little food and little water for so many.

648 The Chief said that a day or two before, some of his men had a
731 fight with some sailors (Mexicans) on the Island of San Estevan four or five miles off the south west corner of Tiburon. Nobody was killed, but the two boats, the wealth of the Island, had drifted away and were lost, leaving eight men marooned on the Island. They had gone there to gather *mescal* to make drink to celebrate a wedding to come off soon. Three men were five days without water. They sent up frantic smoke signals every day. At last they were seen, and help went for them in the only remaining boat on the Island. They were rescued.

648 The Chief and his men and women, with us, are going to Hermosillo
484 ninety miles afoot with all their belongings to ask the Government
123 for food and help.

142 The Chief looks to be seventy years old, a grim dark-skinned in-
[622] dividual with a thin fringe of hair on his upper lip, broad nose, wide nostrils, small black eyes. He is well-built and erect. None of these that I have seen so far have any fat. They are lean and sinewy.
[302] The young men are of large build, high cheek bones, some with hair on
[291] their lips, their long black hair braided; sometimes with a strand of red worsted. All were either barefooted or wore sandals. I saw one pair of sandals made out of turtle hide; another of burro hide.

648 When the Chief arrived, the sail of a vessel was seen over the
123 beach. Bob recognized it as belonging to a launch of a Yaqui Indian

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439 little gods I traded some muslin, a harmonica and some *panoche*. For
123 native hair brushes, I traded three fine-tooth combs for catching *piojos*, or lice, easier. I gave each woman a little round mirror and they were greatly pleased.

To the old Chief I presented a good pocket knife and a mirror. For the bow I traded a spark lighter. By striking the edge of a small wheel with milled edge it strikes a spark from a small flint and lights a wick.

123 We asked for a dance, and the Seris, using the bow and striking
535 sticks for music, the slender girl jumped up and down on a flat piece
[534] of tin which served, instead, of a turtle shell and also served for
[252] baking flour cakes upon also. A while before, Louis had seen a woman
[415] wash her head and that of a child in the chamber pot, empty the water and then cook in it.

After the girl had danced a while on the tin, old Manual Encina pushed her away and hopped on himself and did the double-shuffle for half an hour, after which we left for our camp.

197 The language of the Seris is the most difficult and peculiar I
194 have ever heard. It is spoken deep in the throat with the mouth open and sounds like no other language I have ever heard except that there are some sounds like Papago.

439 Even before breakfast of the next day we were still trading with
123 the Indians, and in an hour or so I possessed nearly everything they had except their rags. They seemed happy and contented and postponed their trip to Hermosillo. I left some stuff with Louis Thomson to be traded later for bows and arrows, Pelican skin dresses and baby cradles.

We then arranged our loads, said *Adios* to the Seris, and left for Hermosillo, where we arrived without accident about six-thirty p.m. The sun was very hot and the road heavy and the sun glaring, and we were all very tired when we reached town. I stored my stuff with Mr. Marks at Hotel Cohen, and will crate it before leaving for Yaqui River.

123 Before leaving the Seri Chief I told him that whenever he saw
202 this sign---Circle Bar D and left hand below it, it was me---their friend, and not to shoot at me. He said he would tell all the Seris, and I left him my card with the same sign on it. When will I see him again!

123 it from shore by a paddle. A little child in the boat sat still as a
484 mouse. No matter how the boat rocked, it never whimpered or cried. All the children stayed perfectly quiet in the frail crafts, in the very positions in which they were placed.

123 Once the boat approached shore to secure a small octopus for fish
484 bait. One was finally located by Stanley, who could see its eyes
136 shining with a baleful purple light under a large boulder in about
220 eighteen inches of water. The Seri got out and pinned it down with an oar, while Roberto pounded it time and time again with another oar. Even then it escaped in a cloud of sepia which it discharged. Its tentacles were easily a foot in length, and its color was the bottom of the sea. If it once gets a grip on a rock it is practically impossible to tear it loose.

Schools of porpoises played close to the boat each day, curving up to breathe and throw spray and then diving lazily below the surface, frequently gliding like a dark shadow below the waves. Sometimes, in the sheer joy of living, they would leap clear of the water and splash back in a spray of foam.

123 We soon reached the extreme point where it juts from the Sonora
484 shore, landed and set a signal smoke to notify other Seris on the
[208] Island. (A dry *pitahalla* cactus was selected for a black smoke.) No answering signal came. We crossed the narrow channel, the Infernillo, a little over a mile wide, the water like a mill pond, and landed on the sheltered side and unloaded on the stony beach. For miles the beach was covered by windrows of round wave-worn rocks and pebbles of all beautiful colors and sizes mingled with strange shells and seaweed. Here we made camp and stayed overnight.

The Indian canoe landed its cargo of women, children and dogs a little later, and established a camp adjoining. Three little boys were commissioned to secure us some clams and they returned in a while with a pail of clams, one crab and some oysters. These were boiled in salt water, the meat extracted and Pancho Oliverria cooked them in rice for supper. The crab was my especial delicacy.

123 Roberto and Stanley walked off after dinner to hunt in the mountains a few miles back from the coast, and they returned long after dark very weary from carrying, for seven miles, a young burro deer which they had shot. The Indians soon gathered around it chattering volubly, as both they and ourselves had eaten no meat for several days. We gave them nearly three-fourths of it, reserving a hind quarter and some ribs for ourselves. Rafael Feliz and Chico, with skill born of long practice, skinned and unjointed the animal in a very short time, and devoured a good part of their share in a cooking pot a little later, although they had eaten only a little while before. The boys cracked the bones and scraped the marrow, eating it like candy.

[484] At six thirty the next morning, we were crowded in the boats again